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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR IO DAS MILLER, IO/EDA - BEHREND, KOTOK
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FROM THE U.S. MISSION TO THE UN AGENCIES IN ROME

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: AORC EAGR EAID KUNR XA FAO

SUBJECT: AFRICA GROUP SEEKS STRONG MANDATE FOR RE-ELECTION OF FAO DIRECTOR GENERAL JACQUES DIOUF

REF: 04 ROME 2873

Sensitive but unclassified - please handle accordingly.

11. (SBU) On October 31, Egyptian Ambassador Helmy Bedeir (current chair of the Africa Regional Group in Rome) and Senegalese Ambassador Papa Cheikh Saadibou Fall (representing the nominating country) called on Ambassador Hall in order to seek USG support for the re-election of Dr. Jacques Diouf to a third term as Director General (DG) of FAO. The two African permanent representatives said it was important for the DG to have a strong mandate, so as to allow him to be effective in meeting the challenges the organization faces, including pressing reform and budget questions.

12. (SBU) Ambassador Hall responded that he enjoyed a good personal working relationship with Diouf, but restated the longstanding USG position on the value and importance of term limits for heads of UN agencies, no matter how qualified or talented the incumbent. The Ambassador acknowledged that Diouf, as the sole candidate, would in all likelihood be re-elected. The USG wished him well and looked forward to continuing to work with him, but the USG was not yet ready to make a decision on the upcoming vote. He stressed the USG's interest in reforming and strengthening FAO, and noted the DG's cooperation with the member-led initiative for an Independent External Evaluation. The appointment of a strong senior management team will be crucial; there are excellent candidates available, including several Americans. FAO must focus on its essential mandate in food and agriculture, and should not be allowed to become a platform for political rhetoric, as had happened when Zimbabwe's President Mugabe spoke at the World Food Day event on October 17. As the major contributor to FAO, the USG wants to ensure that the organization is as effective and efficient as possible.

13. (SBU) The Egyptian and Senegalese permreps expressed appreciation for Ambassador Hall's forthright comments. Bedeir admitted that many members had been very disappointed with what had happened on World Food Day, but added that it was not possible to tell visiting heads of state what to say. The two African diplomats stressed that they were working on behalf of the organization and its members, and not for Diouf personally; but they added that they had taken note of USG concerns, and would pass them on. The meeting ended with all three ambassadors expressing a shared commitment to strengthening and enhancing the effectiveness of FAO.

HALL